

# Friendship & A Discovery in Jerusalem



A story of an adventure in Jerusalem  
for **Stephen Shanahan & Martin McBurney**

On Sunday 9th November 2003  
Written by Martin

The photographs were taken next day,  
mostly by Steve, some by me  
(the ones in which you see Steve).

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## Our Map



## OUR REASONS FOR VISITING ISRAEL

### ISRAEL

This 11-day trip would be my 1st visit to Israel. Like so many other people before me, I would be coming as a Christian pilgrim to the Holy Land.

This would be Steve's 4th visit to Israel, all in the last 4 years. Travelling with me, he would be:

- ✿ meeting again some friends and acquaintances whom he first met on his earlier visits;
- ✿ revisiting some favourite places – especially Nazareth, Mt Olivet and the Sea of Galilee;
- ✿ staying over again at Nazareth and Mt Olivet;
- ✿ staying over – for the 1st time – at Tiberias on the shores of the Sea of Galilee;
- ✿ visiting some areas that would be new to him – especially Northern Galilee;
- ✿ showing me – as he showed 4 other friends during his 2nd visit – several sites that many of us believe that Steve successfully identified from information in "The Urantia Book".

### A PROPOSAL

Back in our home city of Melbourne, Australia, Steve had proposed that we spend a day or two searching for the tomb of Jesus, utilising information in "The Urantia Book". Naturally, I asked, "Why?". Steve said that, during his 2nd visit to Israel, our friend Ryta Kunciuonas had an experience at a site in Jerusalem called "The Garden Tomb".

Steve said that he did not think that "The Garden Tomb" was the true site of Jesus' tomb. He said that it was his belief that a site matching the data in "The Urantia Book" might exist and that it might also be possible to find it. Steve wanted to see if the tomb that Ryta visited matched the description of the tomb described in "The Urantia Book". If not, then he wanted to search for a match.

So I agreed to join Steve in a search, if the prevailing circumstances in Israel allowed.

### INFORMATION IN "THE URANTIA BOOK"

Here are the clues that we hoped to utilise in our search for Jesus' tomb, followed by the complete paragraphs in which they occur (the emphasis in the full quotations is ours).

#### Where to look?

- ✿ *"a short distance north of Golgotha"*
- ✿ *"across the road leading to Samaria"*
- ✿ *"started from Golgotha for Joseph's tomb across the way"*
- ✿ *"This tomb of Joseph was in his garden on the hillside on the eastern side of the road"*
- ✿ *See also several references to the Damascus Gate – included in the relevant part of our story.*

What exterior features would we be looking for?

- ✿ *"hewn out of solid rock"*
- ✿ *"(This tomb of Joseph) faced toward the east"*
- ✿ *"roll the doorstone up before the entrance to the tomb"*
- ✿ *"rolled yet another stone before the tomb"*
- ✿ *"much like a millstone, and it moved in a groove chiseled out of the rock"*
- ✿ *"All five of the women then sat down on the stone near the entrance"*
- ✿ *"they (Peter and John) sat down on the stone"*

What interior features would tend to confirm its identity?

- ✿ *"a chamber about ten feet square"*
- ✿ *"on a shelf in the tomb"*
- ✿ *"in the sepulchre niche"*
- ✿ *"In the recess of stone"*
- ✿ *"at the foot of the burial niche"*
- ✿ *"on the burial shelf"*

*A crucified person could not be buried in a Jewish cemetery; there was a strict law against such a procedure. Joseph and Nicodemus knew this law, and on the way out to Golgotha they had decided to bury Jesus in Joseph's new family tomb, hewn out of solid rock, located a short distance north of Golgotha and across the road leading to Samaria. No one had ever lain in this tomb, and they thought it appropriate that the Master should rest there. Joseph really believed that Jesus would rise from the dead, but Nicodemus was very doubtful. These former members of the Sanhedrin had kept their faith in Jesus more or less of a secret, although their fellow Sanhedrists had long suspected them, even before they withdrew from the council. From now on they were the most outspoken disciples of Jesus in all Jerusalem.*  
"The Urantia Book", page 2013

*At about half past four o'clock the burial procession of Jesus of Nazareth started from Golgotha for Joseph's tomb across the way. The body was wrapped in a linen sheet as the four men carried it, followed by the faithful women watchers from Galilee. The mortals who bore the material body of Jesus to the tomb were: Joseph, Nicodemus, John, and the Roman centurion.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2013

*They carried the body into the tomb, a chamber about ten feet square, where they hurriedly prepared it for burial. The Jews did not really bury their dead; they actually embalmed them. Joseph and Nicodemus had brought with them large quantities of myrrh and aloes, and they now wrapped the body with bandages saturated with these solutions. When the embalming was completed, they tied a napkin about the face, wrapped the body in a linen sheet, and reverently placed it on a shelf in the tomb.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2013

*After placing the body in the tomb, the centurion signalled for his soldiers to help roll the doorstone up before the entrance to the tomb. The soldiers then departed for Gehenna with the bodies of the thieves while the others returned to Jerusalem, in sorrow, to observe the Passover feast according to the laws of Moses.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2013

*When Pilate heard this request of the Sanhedrists, he said: "I will give you a guard of ten soldiers. Go your way and make the tomb secure." They went back to the temple, secured ten of their own guards, and then marched out to Joseph's tomb with these ten Jewish guards and ten Roman soldiers, even on this Sabbath morning, to set them as watchmen before the tomb. These men rolled yet another stone before the tomb and set the seal of Pilate on and around these stones, lest they be disturbed without their knowledge. And these twenty men remained on watch up to the hour of the resurrection, the Jews carrying them their food and drink.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2014

*After the resurrected Jesus emerged from his burial tomb, the body of flesh in which he had lived and wrought on earth for almost thirty-six years was still lying there in the sepulchre niche, undisturbed and wrapped in the linen sheet, just as it had been laid to rest by Joseph and his associates on Friday afternoon. Neither was the stone before the entrance of the tomb in any way disturbed; the seal of Pilate was still unbroken; the soldiers were still on guard. The temple guards had been on continuous duty; the Roman guard had been changed at midnight. None of these watchers suspected that the object of their vigil had risen to a new and higher form of existence, and that the body which they were guarding was now a discarded outer covering which had no further connection with the delivered and resurrected morontia personality of Jesus.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2021

*As they made ready to remove the body of Jesus from the tomb preparatory to according it the dignified and reverent disposal of near-instantaneous dissolution, it was assigned the secondary Urantia midwayers to roll away the stones from the entrance of the tomb. The larger of these two stones was a huge circular affair, much like a millstone, and it moved in a groove chiseled out of the rock, so that it could be rolled back and forth to open or close the tomb. When the watching Jewish guards and the Roman soldiers, in the dim light of the morning, saw this huge stone begin to roll away from the entrance of the tomb, apparently of its own accord--without any visible means to account for such motion--they were seized with fear and panic, and they fled in haste from the scene. The Jews fled to their homes, afterward going back to report these doings to their captain at the temple. The Romans fled to the fortress of Antonia and reported what they had seen to the centurion as soon as he arrived on duty.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2023

*They were greatly surprised to see the stone rolled away from the entrance to the tomb, inasmuch as they had said among themselves on the way out, "Who will help us roll away the stone? They set down their burdens and began to look upon one another in fear and with great amazement. While they stood there, atremble with fear, Mary Magdalene ventured around the smaller stone and dared to enter the open sepulchre. This tomb of Joseph was in his garden on the hillside on the eastern side of the road, and it also faced toward the east. By this hour there was just enough of the dawn of a new day to enable Mary to look back to the place where the Master's body had lain and to discern that it was gone. In the recess of stone where they had laid Jesus, Mary saw only the folded napkin where his head had rested and the bandages wherewith he had been wrapped lying intact and as they had rested on the stone before the celestial hosts removed the body. The covering sheet lay at the foot of the burial niche.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2025-6

*All five of the women then sat down on the stone near the entrance and talked over the situation. It had not yet occurred to them that Jesus had been resurrected. They had been by themselves over the Sabbath, and they conjectured that the body had been moved to another resting place. But when they pondered such a solution of their dilemma, they were at a loss to account for the orderly arrangement of the grave cloths; how could the body have been removed since the very bandages in which it was wrapped were left in position and apparently intact on the burial shelf?*

"The Urantia Book", page 2026

*John, being younger than Peter, outran him and arrived first at the tomb. John tarried at the door, viewing the tomb, and it was just as Mary had described it. Very soon Simon Peter rushed up and, entering, saw the same empty tomb with the grave cloths so peculiarly arranged. And when Peter had come out, John also went in and saw it all for himself, and then they sat down on the stone to ponder the meaning of what they had seen and heard. And while they sat there, they turned over in their minds all that had been told them about Jesus, but they could not clearly perceive what had happened.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2027

## HOW THE DAY BEGAN

### HEATHROW TO MT OLIVET

On the Saturday night of 8 November 2003, as we planned back in Australia, I met Steve at Heathrow airport. With an hour or so to spare before our overnight flight to Israel, we spent it in the British Airways lounge, courtesy of Steve's membership of Qantas, enjoying some juice and snacks and debriefing on our respective trips so far.

Steve had travelled via the USA and France. I had gone direct to London and had stayed with my son, daughter-in-law and 1-year-old grandson at Slough (near Heathrow). I had also made a side trip to Scotland.

Our British Airways 767 to Tel Aviv was on time. Leaving at 10:30pm, we landed at Tel Aviv about 5 hours later, around 5:30am after putting our watches forward by 2 hours. Fortunately the flight was fairly smooth. Steve managed to get some sleep, but I had only a little.

The formalities at Ben Gurion airport were quite thorough. We were quizzed both separately and together, with questions like why are you coming here, where are you going and what are you going to do, are you going to Gaza/West Bank, why do you come here so often (to Steve), why is this a brand new passport (to me).

After obtaining some local currency, we enquired about transport at the Information counter, which pretty much confirmed our intention to catch a share taxi from the airport. As we were taking the last available seats on this minibus, it left a few moments later. Eventually the minibus made the long and rather scenic climb up through the hills to Jerusalem. The driver dropped about half the passengers here and there around Jerusalem and its outskirts – via a mix of divided roads and narrow and obscure lanes – before he dropped us inside the Jaffa Gate in the west wall of the Old City.

From there it would have been a killer walk to our hotel – especially carrying our luggage. As our hotel was in a Palestinian area, we caught a Palestinian taxi for the brief run around the outside of the Old City, with Steve pointing out our Hotel 7 Arches near the top of Mt Olivet, easily identified by its façade of 7 arches. Then it was a short run across the Kidron Valley. Then it was up Mt Olivet along a steep and winding road, where the driver sounded the horn before each bend and proved several times that 2 cars could actually pass each other – I didn't get 100% on my last spatial aptitude test so I was proved wrong on that point, luckily!

### AT MT OLIVET

Our Palestinian-run hotel was very large but, like many other accommodation places in Israel, had only a few guests. Because of that – and because we were checking in ridiculously early in the morning – Steve was able to get room 301 for me, because he reckoned that it provided the best view – a spectacular outlook across the Kidron Valley to the Old City and on across Jerusalem.

*The view of the Old City from room 301 Hotel 7 Arches*



When Steve joined me from his room 306 not long afterwards, he dragged me away from the main window to the side window to show me the view across Mt Olivet to the left – to Bethlehem in the next valley and up the slope on the far side, though some of it was hidden in that valley. Steve then showed me the view from his own room across Mt Olivet to the right, which would have been truly magnificent if I had seen it first – at the time I thought that I was looking into the Garden of Gethsemane but I now believe that its location was lower down the hill.

But ... things to do ... places to go ... and 99% of the day still left ... was it early on a new Sunday or did it still feel like an incredibly long Saturday? So we started with breakfast in the dining room. Only 1 other table was occupied. So we slumped it by choosing a table near the window, which had a view into the front garden then out over the city, but from several floors lower than the main window in room 301.

As we finished breakfast, we considered the key question of the day: "Are we 'up' for a search for Jesus' tomb today?" After each of us tried to guess how much damage had been done by the overnight flight and a semi-sleepless night, we decided: "Yes."

### **MT OLIVET TO DAMASCUS GATE**

So off we went – walking!

If you would like to keep track of our search on a map, see [Our Map](#) at the end of this report.

First we strolled down Mt Olivet on its very steep road, then across the Kidron Valley and up to Lions' Gate (St Stephen's Gate) in the east wall of the Old City. On the final approach, we rested for a few minutes, as there had been a bit of an ascent up to the gate from the Kidron Valley. Through the gate, we continued onwards and upwards along LIONS' GATE ROAD, which became part of the Via Dolorosa before we made a right turn into EL-WAD ROAD to continue walking upwards to exit the Old City at the Damascus Gate in its north wall.

It was still relatively early on a Sunday morning. As we started through the Old City, there were surprisingly few people around – few locals and even fewer tourists. Hardly any establishments were open and we were subjected to very little spruiking.

As we made our way through the Old City, we were suddenly confronted by people, most of whom seemed to be mature Palestinian women, hurrying in the opposite direction. More and more we had to deviate from our straight and relaxed course as we weaved our way around them and through them. Their numbers continued to increase until there was a virtual tide of women filling the road which, as they were all hurrying, added to the ambience of the moment for us. Unlike the few people whom we passed earlier, there was virtually no talk or chatter amongst them and none of them smiled or acknowledged us. They all just continued earnestly on their way. Then it was Steve who recalled the mention of women coming in haste from the direction of Jesus' tomb:

*After Mary had tarried in the doorway of the tomb for a few moments (she did not see distinctly when she first entered the tomb), she saw that Jesus' body was gone and in its place only these grave cloths, and she uttered a cry of alarm and anguish. All the women were exceedingly nervous; they had been on edge ever since meeting the panicky soldiers at the city gate, and when Mary uttered this scream of anguish, they were terror-stricken and fled in great haste. And they did not stop until they had run all the way to the Damascus gate. By this time Joanna was conscience-stricken that they had deserted Mary; she rallied her companions, and they started back for the tomb.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2026

The Gospels have a reference to women hurrying from the tomb, though the context is different:

Mat 28:5-8 (NIV)

*The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.*

The phenomenon of the women hurrying continued after we made our right hand turn towards the Damascus Gate and persisted until we were in sight of the Gate, where once again we found ourselves almost alone again.

## SEARCHING

### AT DAMASCUS GATE

We sat on the steps inside the Damascus Gate, not so much because of the eerie experience we had just had, but to rest again after all the uphill walking since we left our hotel, now that we had reached the real starting point for our search. We sat and enjoyed this place for a few minutes.

Why did our search for Jesus' tomb really begin at the Damascus Gate? Since our search was to be based on information in "The Urantia Book", we took note of the following 3 passages (in which the emphasis is ours).

It is said to be the closest gate to Golgotha, the Roman crucifixion site of Jerusalem:

*Ordinarily, it was the custom to journey to Golgotha by the longest road in order that a large number of persons might view the condemned criminal, but on this day they went by the most direct route to the **Damascus gate**, which led out of the city to the north, and following this road, they soon arrived at Golgotha, the official crucifixion site of Jerusalem. Beyond Golgotha were the villas of the wealthy, and on the other side of the road were the tombs of many well-to-do Jews.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2005

It is said to be the gate used by the first women to visit Jesus' tomb:

*It was about half past three o'clock when the five women, laden with their ointments, arrived before the empty tomb. As they passed out of the **Damascus gate**, they encountered a number of soldiers fleeing into the city more or less panic-stricken, and this caused them to pause for a few minutes; but when nothing more developed, they resumed their journey.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2025

It is said to be the gate that the first women to visit Jesus' tomb fled back to when frightened: Repeating a passage quoted in the previous section above:

*After Mary had tarried in the doorway of the tomb for a few moments (she did not see distinctly when she first entered the tomb), she saw that Jesus' body was gone and in its place only these grave cloths, and she uttered a cry of alarm and anguish. All the women were exceedingly nervous; they had been on edge ever since meeting the panicky soldiers at the city gate, and when Mary uttered this scream of anguish, they were terror-stricken and fled in great haste. And they did not stop until they had run all the way to the **Damascus gate**. By this time Joanna was conscience-stricken that they had deserted Mary; she rallied her companions, and they started back for the tomb.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2026

The Gospels do not identify any particular gate for Jesus' journey to his crucifixion.

### **DAMASCUS GATE TO "THE GARDEN TOMB"**

From the Damascus Gate, we crossed the road – named SULTAN SALIMAN – and walked up the road opposite – named DERECH SHCHEM.

After walking up the right hand side of DERECH SHCHEM for about 100 metres, we turned right into a lane / driveway and up to the entrance to "The Garden Tomb" site.

### **AT "THE GARDEN TOMB"**

However, "The Garden Tomb" site was not open today – Sunday.

Steve explained that, in addition to the tomb, the site contained a viewing platform overlooking Skull Hill, as it was said to have been known about 120 years ago.

From the brochure "*Welcome to The Garden Tomb*":

*The Garden Tomb (Jerusalem) Association, England; established in 1893 for the preservation of the Tomb and Garden outside the city walls of Jerusalem, believed by many to be the Sepulchre (tomb) and Garden of Joseph of Arimathea.*

As written above in Our Reasons for Visiting Israel – A proposal: *Steve wanted to see if the tomb that Ryta visited matched the description of the tomb described in "The Urantia Book". If not, then he wanted to search for a match.*

Given that the site was closed today, what should we do next? We had just 2 days available in the Jerusalem area – today and tomorrow – as we would be moving on to Tiberias on Tuesday. We decided to return here tomorrow when it would be open, but meanwhile to proceed with our search.

When we returned the next day, we observed several inconsistencies between this site and the information in "The Urantia Book":



"The Garden Tomb" has its tomb facing south, whereas the "The Urantia Book" says that it "*faced towards the east*";



"The Garden Tomb" has its tomb roughly north west of Skull Hill, whereas "The Urantia Book" has the tomb "*a short distance north of Golgotha*";



this tomb appeared to be "*hewn out of solid rock*" and there was evidence of a groove for a rolling "*doorstone*" and there was a "*recess of stone*" but possibly no "*shelf in the tomb*".

After we completed our tour of "The Garden Tomb" the next day, we separated for a while to further experience the place. During this time, Steve had an experience of his own here, like Ryta before him and no doubt like many other visitors here.

What of the claim by "The Garden Tomb" site that it is consistent with the Gospel accounts? We think that it is consistent, based on our reading of the relevant Gospel passages, shown below.

Re the crucifixion: 3 of the 4 Gospels identify the site as called "*Golgotha*" and also called "*The Place of the Skull*" or "*the place called the Skull*" – we understand that this is Golgotha in Aramaic and Calvary in Latin. Luke merely calls it "*the Skull*". In "*The Urantia Book*" it is several times called "*Golgotha*" though there are no references to "*Skull*".

*Mat 27:33 (NIV)*

*They came to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull).*

*Mark 15:22 (NIV)*

*They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull).*

*Luke 23:33 (NIV)*

*When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals--one on his right, the other on his left.*

*John 19:17 (NIV)*

*Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha).*

*It was shortly after nine o'clock when this procession of death arrived at Golgotha, and the Roman soldiers set themselves about the task of nailing the two brigands and the Son of Man to their respective crosses.*

*"The Urantia Book", page 2006*

Re the burial: All Gospels except John (who doesn't say) say that the tomb was cut out of rock. All Gospels say that it had a stone across or against the entrance. All Gospels except John (who merely says "removed") say that the stone "rolled". All Gospels say that Joseph of Arimathea organised things. Matthew provides further information by saying that the tomb actually belonged to Joseph of Arimathea. John provides another piece of information with "*At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb*", which is the key passage for the claim by "The Garden Tomb", whose tour also presents evidence of its use as a garden "*of pre-Christian origin*". In "The Urantia Book" references near the start of this report, one may find the equivalent of all this information.

*Mat 27:57-60 (NIV)*

*As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.*

*Mark 15:42-46 (NIV)*

*It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.*

*Luke 23:50-53 (NIV)*

*Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid.*

*Luke 24:2 (NIV)*

*They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,*

*John 19:38-42 (NIV)*

*Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.*

*John 20:1 (NIV)*

*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.*

But not even "The Garden Tomb" makes a claim that it is definitely the true site:

From the brochure "*Welcome to The Garden Tomb*":

*We do not know whether this site was the actual place of the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The garden certainly fits the details described in the Gospel accounts and it helps many to imagine the wonderful events of the first Easter morning.*

(And the website for "The Garden Tomb": [www.gardentomb.com](http://www.gardentomb.com))

Returning to our search today ...

To proceed with our search, we were scouting around trying to look over the high fence of "The Garden Tomb" to identify a suitable landmark on the site – preferably Skull Hill – that could be used as a back-bearing for our compass from "*a short distance north*".

After some minutes of this, we were still unsuccessful, when a couple emerged from the site and started walking down the lane / driveway. This proved to be a synchronistic encounter – especially as we would have been at that spot for only a few minutes – with a couple involved in running the site. When we spoke to these lovely people, who were not upset that I was lurking in the lane / driveway outside their site and Steve peering over the top of their perimeter fence, they confirmed that it was not possible to visit "The Garden Tomb" today, but that it would be open tomorrow – Monday. However, when we mentioned our particular interest in Skull Hill, they volunteered that there was a public place "just around the block" where Skull Hill could be observed and they gave us directions to it.

## "THE GARDEN TOMB" TO SKULL HILL

We followed their directions to an observation opportunity for Skull Hill:

- ✿ retrace our steps back down DERECH SHCHEM to the previous corner – SULTAN SALIMAN;
- ✿ turn left into SULTAN SALIMAN – which runs beside the wall of the Old City;
- ✿ about 100 yards from the corner, look on our left for the old bus station.

Steve reckoned that he could estimate short distances by pacing them out and came up with 98, compared to 100, for this one.



*"100 yards to the old bus station" - along SULTAN SALIMAN from DERECH SHCHEM (the road containing "The Garden Tomb")*



*Laneway beside the old bus station*

We could glimpse Skull Hill, from the footpath, through the fence of the old bus station. However, we got an excellent view of Skull Hill after walking about 20 metres up a laneway next to and just prior to the old bus station.

## AT SKULL HILL

Because we were now directly in front of Skull Hill, it was probably a better view than we would see tomorrow from the viewing platform in "The Garden Tomb" site.



*From the top of the laneway - a view of Skull Hill*



*From the top of the laneway - looking back towards the wall of the Old City (to show its proximity)*

Whatever your perception of the photo above, the features on Skull Hill did indeed look very like a skull to us when we were on-the-spot.

From the brochure "Welcome to *The Garden Tomb*":

*We cannot be sure where the crucifixion took place, but the actual site is of less importance than the spiritual significance of what really happened...*

*The traditional site for that awesome event is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre dating back to the 4th century, the time of the Emperor Constantine. (Our Note: Constantine's mother Helena visited Jerusalem in 326 and 'confirmed' this as the site.) That site is now within the walls of the Old City and for over 200 years questions have been raised over its authenticity.*

We see little merit in the claims for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Furthermore, this site is not consistent with "The Urantia Book", e.g. all of our clues under "Where to look? Some of the contemporary maps of Jerusalem recognise the competing claims of both the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Skull Hill.

An interesting question about Skull Hill is: precisely where would crucifixions have taken place? "The Garden Tomb" has a view on that:

From the brochure "Welcome to *The Garden Tomb*":

*General Charles Gordon was the most famous exponent of the view that the quarry (now this bus station) could have been the place of the crucifixion of Jesus outside the city wall. We cannot be sure, but it is interesting to see the features of a human skull in the rock face to your left. The photograph mounted on our platform shows how that image looked about 120 years ago, when the hillside was already known as 'Skull Hill'.*

So it may have been right here – effectively in front of Skull Hill – where the old bus station is now – very close to the wall of the Old City. Or it could have been further up, around the hill or on top of the hill or both. Some commentators think that the Romans would not want to punish people in such a 'privileged' place as the top of a hill. But most commentators agree that the Romans certainly wanted a very public place, preferably by a road, where passers-by would see what was taking place and even take part. Of the Gospel writers, Matthew and Mark mention heckling by passers-by, as does "The Urantia Book":

*Mat 27:39-40 (NIV)*

*Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"*

*Mark 15:29-30 (NIV)*

*Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!"*

*Many who passed by wagged their heads and, railing at him, said ...*

"The Urantia Book", page 2008

A passage in "The Urantia Book" that mentions a time when "*all of Golgotha was covered by thousands upon thousands of crosses*" could be interpreted as indicating that crucifixions were taking place more extensively than perhaps just on the lower area below Skull Hill:

*Crucifixion was not a Jewish mode of punishment. Both the Greeks and the Romans learned this method of execution from the Phoenicians. Even Herod, with all his cruelty, did not resort to crucifixion. The Romans never crucified a Roman citizen; only slaves and subject peoples were subjected to this dishonourable mode of death. During the siege of Jerusalem, just forty years after the crucifixion of Jesus, all of Golgotha was covered by thousands upon thousands of crosses upon which, from day to day, there perished the flower of the Jewish race. A terrible harvest, indeed, of the seed-sowing of this day.*

"The Urantia Book", page 2005

Whatever the precise location, it is our belief that the vicinity of Skull Hill is the true site of Jesus' crucifixion.

And we now had Skull Hill as our reference point for the next stage of our search. We needed to work our way to the north of it. To facilitate that, we needed a map.

### **SKULL HILL TO OUR 0.5 KM WAYPOINT**

To work our way to the north of Skull Hill, we had a choice of the road to the west of it - DERECH SHCHEM that we had already seen something of – or the next worthwhile road to the east of it, i.e. further along SULTAN SALIMAN. We decided to continued east along SULTAN SALIMAN.

We passed up a few short roads or laneways until, after about 200 metres, we turned left into SALAH E'DIN, which was heading in more or less the direction we wanted. It was also uphill.

There were lots of shops and establishments lining the road, so we kept a careful lookout for a place that might supply us with a map and an equally careful lookout for a place where we could sit down and have a drink. Not far up the road, we saw a likely place for a map. Steve asked for a map of Jerusalem that included this area, preferably a map showing contours. However, the man serving him could only find maps of the Old City. Then an older man, who was sitting in the shop, took over the search and eventually found their one-and-only copy of the map that we wanted. Unfortunately it didn't show contours, but showed all the roads and some of the landmarks in this area.

While this was going on, I was browsing the bookshelves. One particular title caught my eye: "Michael's Jerusalem". So naturally I had a look through it. Deciding that this intriguing title was merely serendipitous rather than synchronistic, I showed the cover to Steve then returned the book to its shelf.

For drinks, the best that we could find was a shop that sold take-away drinks. We carried these over the road to the GF Albright archaeological organisation's property and sat on their front steps to have our drinks. This spot gave us shelter from some light rain, which soon cleared.



*"ROAD No. 1" - SALAH E'DIN - roadsign at corner on near side of GF Albright property*

After finishing our sorely-needed drinks, we went inside to make enquiries about another place of interest to us in Israel. But the key person to see was unavailable, but would be available tomorrow. Later we came to see this as synchronistic, as it let us remain focussed on our search – a short time later we were to have a most synchronistic encounter.

Steve had some information for our search from our friend Urs Ruchti, whom Steve had met during his visit to Paris just before this visit to Israel. In discussing the location of Jesus' tomb in relation to Golgotha, Urs told Steve that he believed that the tomb was between 0.5 km and 1 km north of Golgotha. One of our clues in "The Urantia Book" is that it is "a short distance north of Golgotha".

Now that we had a map, we decided to mark 2 waypoints on it. We did this approximately rather than precisely, as we had only a biro to measure against the scale on our map. We put a dot on our map as a waypoint 0.5 km north of Skull Hill and another dot on our map as a waypoint 1 km north of Skull Hill.

Our 0.5 km waypoint was in a side street off our main road – SALAH E'DIN – so on we walked

Before making a right turn into our side street – IBN ABU TALEB – we looked into the grounds of St George's Cathedral, which was on our main road opposite this side street. The property looked so developed – structures and paved grounds. On the corner of IBN ABU TALEB was another significant building. We wondered if we would find any areas sufficiently undeveloped to let us look for natural rock.

But IBN ABU TALEB at least sloped downwards and in more or less an easterly direction.



*Looking into our side street -  
IBN ABU TALEB*

We walked down the footpath on the right hand side until about 1/3 of the way down this side road – say about 50 metres – to our 0.5 km waypoint.



*At our waypoint "0.5 north of Skull Hill" that we  
calculated and marked on our map - 1/3 along the  
side road opposite St George's Cathedral - IBN  
ABU TALEB - looking back (up the slope)*



*At the same waypoint - looking ahead (down the  
slope)*

### CASTING AROUND

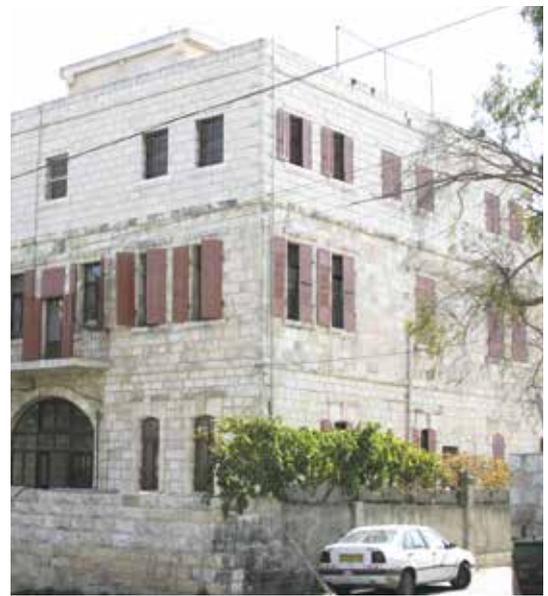
At our 0.5 km waypoint, we started to cast around. Steve walked into the car park right there and spent a few minutes examining this more open property, while I looked into the next property.

I walked on down the side road, checking from our map that the next corner on our right was IBN CHALDUN – but this road didn't look promising so I continued on down IBN ABU TALEB.

Across the next corner on our left – for SHEICH MUCHAMAD – I looked into a property with a large sign saying "SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST STUDY CENTER".



*the next corner on the left of this side road -  
"SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST STUDY CENTER"*



*directly across this same side road -  
"DAR AL-AWLAD SCHOOL"*

I crossed back to the right hand side of IBN ABU TALEB to look into the school directly opposite whose sign said "DAR AL-AWLAD SCHOOL".

Passing the church next door, I continued down to the end of IBN ABU TALEB, where I scanned both ways at the T-intersection of CHATEM E'TAWI and thought that I saw solid rock for the first time. As I had seen mostly properties that allowed no access and others that were unpromising, I was well ahead of Steve. Crossing IBN ABU TALEB so that I would be clearly visible to Steve, I waited for him to come into sight and then pointed into CHATEM E'TAWI.



*At the bottom of this same side road - me pointing into the next road - CHATEM E'TAWI*



*Just along this next road on left hand side - what I had pointed at*

Steve joined me and we turned right into CHATEM E'TAWI and crossed the road to look at a property just a few metres along at the end of CHATEM E'TAWI. As well as lots of rubble, there was indeed some solid rock. But it was unpromising.

We crossed back over CHATEM E'TAWI to look at the property on the other corner. It was the church property, with a very old olive tree as a centrepiece in its sizeable garden. Steve speculated that the tree looked about 1,000 years old.

There was a rock wall along the property's boundary with the next road – ICHVAN E'TSAFA – but it was a low retaining wall of stones, not solid rock.



*Directly across this next road in church property - olive tree - Steve thought 1,000 years old - in left background is a retaining wall beside ICHVAN E'TSAFA*



*Entry into the church property - in foreground is some of its parking area*

Having deviated about 150 metres from our 0.5 km waypoint, and having seen nothing promising so far except the general slope, we discussed what to do next. We noticed movement in this church property's small parking area, so we walked in the open gate to make enquiries.

### **SERVED BY A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**

In the small parking area just inside the gate, there were a few cars, a woman and some children nearby. We approached the woman, who directed us to "the pastor", whom we hadn't noticed as he had just finished parking or moving a car. He got out of the car and was very relaxed and friendly towards us. We told him we were looking for a natural rock slope in this area, whereupon he invited us to come into his church "for refreshments" and "to meet someone who knows (the woman's husband)".

We went with him around the corner of the church to its entrance off our original side road – IBN ABU TALEB. He informed us that he was the real pastor's brother and that the real pastor was absent. He said that he himself lived in Bethlehem, where he ran a Bible College.



*Back around the corner  
(next to the school)  
- same church - "JERUSALEM  
BAPTIST CHURCH"*

We were ushered in through the main entrance and into a room adjacent to the main church, where a small group of people were gathered and enjoying refreshments. We were plied with soft drinks and biscuits and made welcome by these lovely parishioners after their Sunday service at the Jerusalem Baptist Church (someone also referred to it as the East Jerusalem Baptist Church).

It turned out that "someone who knows" wasn't there. I spoke to several people, including the man who had conducted the service – I enquired about his sermon and discussed it with him.

While I was enjoying this fellowship, so was Steve. But Steve also managed to hit paydirt in regard to our search. The first young man whom Steve spoke to quickly learned of our interest in ancient times. Astonishingly, he reached into his pocket, produced a Crusader coin and gave it to Steve as a gift.

Steve felt a connection with a middle aged man nearby. He was thick set, wearing jeans, light tan work boots and a denim jacket. He introduced himself to Steve as John. Steve asked John if he had lived in the area for a while and whether he knew of a rock face on a slope facing east.

John replied by describing the rock formations and the flow of water to WADI EL'JOZ.

John went on to describe the 3rd outer defensive wall of Jerusalem and the possible site of Joseph of Arimathea's garden – possibly 200 acres and possibly including part of this area, i.e. where this Baptist Church stood.

Curiously, as Steve was leaving, I was still talking to the preacher of the day. As Steve waited for me, he was 'collared' by John. He said, "Come, I'll point you in the direction of the rock formations. Start at St George's Cathedral, head down to The American Colony Hotel, then you shall see the 'fall' down into WADI EL'JOZ". John drew contour lines on our map. This answered our prayers for a contour map.

#### **FOLLOWING THE DIRECTIONS OF JOHN**

As we retraced our steps back up the slope to St George's Cathedral on the main road – SALAH E'DIN – at the top of our side road – IBN ABU TALEB, we discussed the intriguing synchronicity of these various experiences at the Baptist Church.

We were opposite St George's Cathedral as we turned right to resume our walk along the main road – SALAH E'DIN.



*Back on the main road - SALAH E'DIN - looking back (south) towards the Old City (not visible)*



*at the same point - looking ahead (north) to the next bend - where the main road becomes DERECH SHCHEM (the road merging in from the left)*

We walked less than 100 metres along the main road to its next bend, at the intersection with DERECH SHCHEM merging in from the left. You may remember that, earlier, DERECH SHCHEM was the road containing "The Garden Tomb".

This intersection was where the 2 roads passing Skull Hill – DERECH SHCHEM on the western side of Skull Hill and SALAH E'DIN on the eastern side of Skull Hill – merged to continue northwards as DERECH SHCHEM.

Ahead, we could just make out the sign at The American Colony Hotel.



*At that next bend - looking ahead (north) to The American Colony Hotel*

From the bend, we walked about 100 metres further to The American Colony Hotel. We walked a few metres up their driveway to the entrance. Steve said that he might stay here one day and would drop in now to obtain information.



*A few metres in from the main road - entrance to The American Colony Hotel*

As Steve walked inside, I turned to a couple of shops across the driveway from the hotel entrance. While waiting for Steve, I looked thoughtfully at a display stand outside "The Bookshop", where there were 2 sets of placemats showing "The Garden Tomb".



*A longer shot of this entrance - in left foreground is a display stand outside "The Bookshop" - the 2 sets of placemats in the middle are "The Garden Tomb"*

When Steve came out of the hotel, we strolled the few metres back to the main road. Just as we started to continue along the main road, Steve said: "It has to be within 200 metres".



*From The American Colony Hotel - looking ahead (north)  
- Steve: "It has to be within 200 metres".*

Steve headed off across the main road – DERECH SHCHEM – and the intersection with KONDER just ahead.



*across the main road - DERECH SHCHEM - and the intersection with KONDER*

However, after 70 metres or so, Steve realised that it was the wrong direction. He took a compass-bearing that told us that the slope falling away beyond KONDER faced north, not east.



*70 metres or so past The American Colony Hotel - Steve confirming via compass that we have gone the wrong way as this slope beyond KONDER does not face east*

### A MARKED CAR

We walked a few metres back to the main road – DERECH SHCHEM – and, as we went to cross back over, we noticed a ‘606’ number plate on the parked car beside us. Then we noticed ‘NO FEAR’ above the number plate. Unable to decide whether these were synchronistic or merely serendipitous, we had a good laugh.

We were not yet aware that the vacant block beyond the car in the photo was in fact our target site.



*back on the main road - the ‘606’ number plate and the ‘NO FEAR’ sign - across the road the pile of rubble is at the near corner of our target site*

## DISCOVERY IN THE GARDEN

### FINDING ROCK AT LAST



We crossed the main road, walked a few metres, then entered the vacant block. Almost immediately we found ourselves on solid rock.

*Our target site - me on a 'pathway' used by locals as a shortcut (around an intersection)*



As I was not as nimble as Steve, I stayed on a 'pathway' across the property that appeared to be used by locals as a shortcut (around an intersection).

*A longer shot - me just a little further along the 'pathway'*



Steve was having a closer look at the solid rock that seemed to cover much of the site.

*The solid rock covering much of the site*



*Looking east across the site*

## LOOKING AROUND THE LOCATION



We continued to move further across the site in the general direction of the valley in plain view beyond the site – WADI ELJOZ – ...

*Me further along the 'pathway' - near the top edge of the solid rock slab to the right*



... until we got to where the solid rock slab appeared to end.

*Approaching the top edge of the solid rock slab*



At the edge of the solid rock slab, Steve took an all-important compass-bearing to confirm that it faced east, which it did precisely ...

*The top edge of the solid rock slab - Steve confirming via our compass that it faced east*



... while I am pointing to the cave entrance that we discovered underneath where Steve is standing.

*Me pointing to the cave entrance underneath where Steve is standing*

**THE TRUE SITE?**



We approached the cave entrance ...

*The cave entrance*



... again Steve being more nimble than me ...

*Steve at the cave entrance*



... to get an ever-closer look at it ...

*Close-up of the cave entrance*



... until we could look inside.

*Looking into the cave*



Steve was the one nimble enough to go inside. He measured its dimensions of this upper part of the cave as roughly 6 feet by 12 feet, which does not match but is in the ball park of the clue in "The Urantia Book" of "*a chamber about ten feet square*".

*Steve inside the cave*



The back wall was also comprised of solid rock.

*Interior of the cave - back wall*



Steve commented that the workmanship appeared to be of a high standard.

*Interior of the cave - back corner*

It was evident that the top outer face of the cave entrance had been cut to present a more-or-less flat surface. One possible explanation for this is that it would have been necessary to have a flat surface to enable a large doorstone to be rolled across the entrance.

For our photos, we used 3 small rocks as markers for the side edges of the cave entrance plus the outer limit of the cut surface on one side of the entrance.



Firstly, a shot to the north side of the cave entrance, showing 2 markers:

*Roof (north) - upper stone marks limit of cut face - lower stone marks edge of cave entrance*



Secondly, a shot to the south side of the cave entrance, again showing 2 markers:

*Roof (south) - stones mark edges of cave entrance - upper stone also marks limit of cut face*



Thirdly, another shot to the south side of the cave entrance, now showing all 3 markers:

*Roof (south) - all 3 markers - stone in centre and upper stone mark edges of cave entrance - lower stone and upper stone mark limits of cut face*

Finally, a shot showing a close-up of the compass confirming that the cave faces east:



*Steve's compass at the roof edge -  
confirming that it faces east*

We walked across the road – IBN JUBAIR – beyond the cave and looked back at the cave entrance. This road was a side road that intersected with our main road – DERECH SHCHEM.



*The cave entrance - zooming in from  
across the side road - IBN JUBAIR*



*Still standing on IBN JUBAIR (side road) looking west at the site*

### **THE REMAINDER OF THE LOCATION**

The site also contained a monument located in a garden setting in the corner of the site at the intersection of IBN JUBAIR (side road) & DERECH SHCHEM (main road). All of its inscriptions were in Hebrew. We photographed it thoroughly for future translation.

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Let us leave you with a close-up photo of the cave entrance, shot from directly in front:



*close-up of cave entrance - from directly in front*

## HOW THE DAY ENDED

### THE AMERICAN COLONY HOTEL

Feeling that our mission was finished and being In need of food and drink and rest, we decided to walk back to The American Colony Hotel.

Steve paced this distance, to be evaluated against his earlier statement "It has to be within 200 metres." He paced it as 202 metres.

We went into The American Colony Hotel and made ourselves comfortable in Val's Brasserie Lounge, which overlooked an attractive courtyard and pool.



*the courtyard and pool inside The American Colony Hotel*

Our time there was a mixture of debriefing and discussion of our search, plus thoughtful silences brought on by both our experiences and our tiredness. We also made notes, while our experiences were so vivid in our memories, as the basis for this report.

The first matter that we discussed was the state of the cave and its immediate surrounds. The photos have shown you the amount of trash that was in and around the cave. Though Steve was tempted to remove some of the more offensive items from the cave, he did not. We decided that the trash might inadvertently be serving as a kind of protection for the cave.

The key matter that we discussed was of course what might be in the lower part of the cave that we could not access and likewise in the area outside the bottom of the cave. Several of our clues were concerned with these areas, but we were unable to investigate them. Would there be "a shelf" or "niche" or "recess of stone"? Would there be further evidence of a rolling "doorstone", perhaps its "groove chiseled out of the rock"? However, we hardly expected either the "doorstone" or "yet another stone" that had been "rolled before the tomb" to survive here. But what of "the stone near the entrance" that was large enough for at least 5 people to sit on – one might think that it would be unlikely to survive here unless it happened to be well-embedded? Would the lower part of the chamber have a different length or width to the upper part that Steve had measured?

We revisited our discussions that day about the clues:

✿ "a short distance north of Golgotha"

✿ "across the road leading to Samaria"

✿ "started from Golgotha for Joseph's tomb across the way"

✿ "This tomb of Joseph was in his garden on the hillside on the eastern side of the road"

Back near the Damascus Gate, the exact route of "the road leading to Samaria" had not been clear to us. Was it a similar route to the modern DERECH SHCHEM on the western side of Skull Hill or to the modern SALAH E'DIN on the eastern side of Skull Hill? DERECH SHCHEM starts quite near the Damascus Gate, but SALAH E'DIN starts maybe 300 metres to its east.

However, the main road as it goes past the cave – DERECH SHCHEM after the merger of DERECH SHCHEM and SALAH E'DIN – seemed to us highly likely to be the route of "the road leading to Samaria" because of the topography there. There our main road was on a ridge, between the cave on the slope overlooking WADI EL'JOZ "on the eastern side of the road" and the slope that was a false lead for us on the other side of the road.

As for the clue "a short distance north of Golgotha", we were very comfortable with the distance of about 0.75 km from Skull Hill to the cave. I went on to think about the "terror-stricken" women who "did not stop until they had run all the way to the Damascus gate" (maybe 150 metres from Skull Hill) and suggested to Steve that this passage fitted rather well with the location of the cave. I suggested that these women, who could walk from Galilee to Jerusalem and then up those last challenging hills to the city, would have little difficulty running less than a kilometre, some of it downhill, especially when "terror-stricken".

### **USING ALL RESOURCES**

Steve borrowed some money from me for a special bottle (to take away) that he discovered on the hotel's wine list. After passing over the money, I said that I had just given him the last of my cash.

Wondering whether we could walk any further, we decided to take a cab back to our hotel. Steve checked to see if he had enough cash for the fare. He discovered that the only money that he had left was the single Crusader coin that had been gifted to him at the Baptist Church.

We solved the problem of paying the fare by negotiating with a cab driver – before we set off – to pay when we reached our hotel.

## WHAT DO WE THINK NOW?

**MARTIN**

When Steve shared with me the story of his first visit to Israel and especially of his experiences in Nazareth, I neither believed nor disbelieved what he thought he had found there. However I told him that his findings were consistent with the passages that I remembered from "The Urantia Book". Then I went away and re-read the relevant sections of the book and decided that his findings were entirely consistent with it (and later told him so). However I still had not arrived at either belief or disbelief and was not concerned about whether I ever would.

On occasions, I've been fortunate in having friends or family members share some of their spiritual experiences with me. It is usually a joy to hear them. And it is often thought-provoking and valuable for me. I seldom try the usually impossible task of sitting in judgment on someone else's apparent spiritual experience. So I often end up with neither belief nor disbelief about what I've heard. I think of this as having matters "on the shelf". Occasionally something connects for me – at the time or later – and the matter is "off the shelf" and is something I then either believe or disbelieve. Whether I am right or not is part of the great adventure of life, because the belief or disbelief on some matter will usually be a factor in a future decision or action. Like whether to visit Israel!

In the matter of Steve's experiences in Nazareth, after a little while I came to believe.

However, in this current story, I was actually travelling with Steve and was actively involved. With Steve that day, I walked the walk and talked the talk. As Steve and I were sitting in the dining room of The American Colony Hotel, having food and drink and resting from the walking and the intense concentration of the previous hours, I was thinking about 3 things:

- 1.** I didn't think that I could possibly walk back to our hotel on Mt Olivet, but I didn't want to "blink first"! Eventually Steve "blinked first" and suggested that we take a cab. Agreeing, I laughed and told him that I was waiting for his suggestion.
- 2.** Did I believe or disbelieve that we had found Jesus' true tomb or was the matter "on the shelf"? After pondering on that, I remember saying to Steve, "Well ... I reckon that logic says that what we just found is a 'probable hit' and faith says that what we just found is the true site."
- 3.** Am I usually right about these things? Well, for months before my trip to Israel and the UK, I had been saying to Steve and my family that I would probably not bother going into London or Jerusalem. I remember saying to Steve that I was not interested in a "grotto crawl" through Jerusalem. I had expected to skip going into Jerusalem and instead spend time around Mt Olivet and walk over to Bethany. (In the end there was no time to visit Bethany but we did walk across to Mt Scopus.) As I sat there that afternoon, aching from the hard walking on hard ground in unsuitable shoes, I was amused by a thought, "How wrong could I be about going into Jerusalem!" But I skipped London, only passing through it to make train connections between Heathrow and Scotland!

What do I think now? ... the same as I was thinking back then (see point 2 above).

## STEPHEN

### THE EXPERIENCE

It was a curious, unique experience. Whenever the trail appeared to stop a fortuitous set of circumstances would 'push or lead' us on further. The report may suggest a circuitous route but it was in fact very direct. The moment we left the Mount of Olives to reaching the tomb we really only back tracked up one street and I find this rather extraordinary.

Do I believe this is the tomb? Yes I do and in part because to the following:

### THE EVIDENCE

The Tomb is north of the Damascus Gate and Golgotha thus eliminating at least 75% of the local Jerusalem region. The site is located on the only east facing rock slope north of the Old City. The Tomb is "over the way", i.e. up and over a hill with Jerusalem out of view.

The Tomb lies approximately 750 metres north of Golgotha as estimated by Urs Ruchti.

Also, biblical archaeologists propose only five tombs were built with the rolling stone design during that era due to the prohibitive costs.

It is well known Joseph of Arimathea was wealthy, having large land holdings North of the city. It is therefore highly probable the Tomb belonged to him. Curiously, the topography of the land surrounding the Tomb is ideal for a garden of that time because the land is virtually identical to the reconstructed 1st Century garden on exhibition at the Nazareth Village project.

The Tomb is also approximately 10 feet square and the interior stone masonry is of a very superior type. The corners are superbly rounded and the walls appear very smooth.

Excavations will no doubt uncover the niche (stone shelf) and maybe a groove for the rolling stone. Forensic archaeologists may even find evidence of wax that sealed the stones assuming they are still there. In addition, it may be possible to date when the tomb was carved out of the rock face by examination of the interior stone surface. We know the tomb had just been completed before Jesus death.

### CONCLUSION

The tomb found us... we didn't find the tomb!

